CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A system comprising:

a client system including a plurality of functional components; and

an agent executing in said client system for accessing a server and determining if any messages identified as relating to at least one of said plurality of functional components are available, wherein if a message identified as relating to at least one of said plurality of functional components is available, said agent causing such message to be output.

2.   The system of claim 1 wherein said plurality of functional components comprises firmware.

3.   The system of claim 1 wherein said plurality of functional components comprises software.

4.   The system of claim 1 wherein said plurality of functional components comprises any selected from the group consisting of: firmware, peripheral device, host device, and software.

5.   The system of claim 1 wherein at least one of said messages comprise update notification for a corresponding one of said plurality of functional components.

6.   The system of claim 1 wherein at least one of said messages comprises an advertisement.

7.   The system of claim 1 wherein at least one of said messages has associated type information that identifies a type of the corresponding message.

8.   The system of claim 7 wherein said type comprises any selected from the group consisting of: an update notification, an advertisement, a tip, a warning, a special offer, and a recall notice.

9.   The system of claim 1 wherein said agent is configurable to determine whether to present a message identified as relating to at least one of said plurality of functional components based at least in part on a corresponding message type.

10.   The system of claim 1 wherein said agent is further operable to access a separate server to determine at least one network location for accessing said messages for at least one of the plurality of firmware components.

11.   The system of claim 1 wherein at least one of said messages has a triggering criteria associated therewith, said triggering criteria identifying at least one functional component to which the message relates; and wherein the agent is operable to perform said determining, based at least in part on the triggering criteria of each message.

12.   The system of claim 11 wherein in performing said determining, said agent determines whether at least one of said plurality of functional components satisfies the triggering criteria associated with any of said messages.

13.   A system comprising:

a client system that is at least temporarily communicatively coupled via a communication network to a server system, wherein said client system comprises at least one firmware component; and

an agent executing on the client system for determining from information on said server system if any updates are available for the at least one firmware component.

14.   The system of claim 13 wherein if an update is available for the at least one firmware component, said agent further executing on the client system for determining if the update is possessed by the client system.

15.   The system of claim 14 wherein if the update is not possessed by the client system, said agent further executing on the client system for outputting notification of such an update being available.

16.   The system of claim 13 wherein said agent further executes on the client system for accessing said server system via said communication network.

17.   The system of claim 16 wherein said agent performs said accessing of said server system only if detected that the client system has a communication connection established with said communication network.

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18.   The system of claim 13 wherein the at least one firmware component resides on a host computer.

19.   The system of claim 13 wherein said client system comprises a peripheral device coupled to a host computer, and wherein the at least one firmware component resides on said peripheral device.

20.   The system of claim 13 wherein said agent is further operable to access a separate server to determine at least one network location for accessing update information for the at least one firmware component.

21.   The system of claim 13 wherein said agent is further operable to trigger download of an update responsive to user input.

22.   The system of claim 13 wherein agent is further operable to update the at least one firmware with a downloaded update.

23.   Computer-executable software code stored to a computer-readable media, the computer-executable software code comprising:
        code for accessing a server system and determining if any updates are available for firmware that is present on a client system; and
        code for outputting notification on the client system that an update is available for the firmware, if determined that an update is available for the firmware.

24.   The computer-executable software code of claim 23 wherein the code for accessing and the code for outputting reside on said client system.

25.   The computer-executable software code of claim 23 wherein said client system comprises a host computer and at least one peripheral device communicatively coupled to the host computer.

26.   The computer-executable software code of claim 25 wherein the firmware resides on the at least one peripheral device.

27. The computer-executable software code of claim 23 further comprising:

code for detecting whether said client system has a communication connection established with a communication network, wherein said code for accessing attempts to access said server only if detected that said communication connection is established.

28. The computer-executable software code of claim 23 further comprising:

code for monitoring whether said client system has a communication connection established with a communication network.

29. The computer-executable software code of claim 23 further comprising:

code for activating said code for accessing upon a communication connection with a communication network being detected for said client system.

30. The computer-executable software code of claim 23 further comprising:

code for further accessing a separate server to identify said server system possessing update information for the firmware.

31. The computer-executable software code of claim 30 wherein said code for accessing said separate server includes code for identifying a network location for said server system possessing update information for the firmware.

32. The computer-executable software code of claim 23 wherein said notification provides an interface that enables a user to select to download the available update.

33. The computer-executable software code of claim 23 further comprising:

code for updating the firmware with an available update upon the available update being downloaded to the client system.

34. A method comprising:

storing a message to a server system;

associating information with the message identifying at least one component that is to trigger presentation of the message;

determining, by an agent on a client system, from the information if any messages are available that are identified as being triggered for a component present on the client system.

35. The method of claim 34 wherein if a message is determined to be available that is identified as being triggered for a component that is present on the client system, said agent causing the message to be output on the client system.

36. The method of claim 35 further comprising:

distributing ones of said agent to a plurality of client systems for monitoring said server system for messages to be output on their respective client system.

37. The method of claim 35 further comprising:

said agent determining whether to output a message identified as being triggered for a component that is present on the client system based at least in part on a message type.

38. The method of claim 34 wherein said associating comprises:

associating information with the message identifying firmware that is to trigger presentation of the message.

39. The method of claim 34 further comprising:

including an update notification for a corresponding component in at least one of said messages.

40. The method of claim 34 further comprising:

including type information for at least one message that identifies a type of the corresponding at least one message.

41. The method of claim 40 wherein said including type information comprises:

including at least one type selected from the group consisting of: an update notification, an advertisement, a tip, a warning, a special offer, and a recall notice.

42. A method comprising:

an agent on a client system accessing information on a server system;

determining, by said agent, from said information, whether an update is available for firmware on the client system; and

if determined that an update is available for firmware on the client system, said agent causing notification of said update to be output on the client system.

43.   The method of claim 42 further comprising:

said notification providing an interface that enables a user to select to have the update downloaded to the client system.

44.   A client system comprising:

a plurality of functional means;

means for accessing update information on a server system;

means for determining from the update information whether an update is available for any of the functional means of the client system; and

means for providing notification on the client system of an update determined to be available for any of the functional means of the client system.

45.   The client system of claim 44 wherein said plurality of functional means comprises at least one selected from the group consisting of:

a host computer, a peripheral device coupled to said host computer, firmware residing on said peripheral device, and firmware residing on said host computer.

46.   A method for distributing messages to a plurality of clients to whom the messages relate, said method comprising:

storing the messages on a server;

associating a trigger criteria with each message, wherein the trigger criteria identifies at least one functional component to which the message relates; and

distributing an agent to the plurality of clients, wherein the agent is operable to periodically access the server and determine any messages for which the agent's respective client possesses the at least one functional component as specified by the message's associated triggering criteria.

47.   The method of claim 46 wherein the agent is further operable to present any message determined to have its associated trigger criteria satisfied by the agent's respective client.

48.   The method of claim 46 wherein said messages comprise update notifications for said at least one functional component to which the messages relate.